A conversation with

Carrol Walsh

Tank Driver- the Battle of Europe

George Gross and "Red" Walsh, 1945

"A fugitive from the law of averages"

Matthew Rozell: How old are you?

Carroll Walsh: 80 this year.

M.R.: What branch were you in?

C.W.: Army.

M.R.: In the army?

C.W.: Yes.

M.R.: Can you recall your dates of service, even if it's just from year to year?

C.W.: From, I think, October 1940 to October of '45.

M.R.: What was your job?

C.W.: Well, it was just basic infantry training.

M.R.: What was the highest rank you achieved?

C.W.: Second lieutenant.

M.R.: You were in Europe, correct?

C.W.: Yes.

M.R.: European Theatre?

C.W.: Yes, ETO as we would say.

M.R.: What were the major campaigns you were involved in?

C.W.: Normandy, Northern France, Belgium, and Holland.

M.R.: Yes.

C.W.: I think it would be like the central plains Germany, central plains Germany I think they would call it.

M.R.: All right.

C.W.: The Bulge.

M.R.: Yes.

C.W.: And I don't know what the last one was called, final campaign in Germany.

M.R.: Yes.

C.W.: There were five major campaigns in Europe and I was in all of them and I have five battle stars.

M.R.: What did you get battle stars for?

C.W.: Each campaign. There were five campaigns there I think in Northern Europe anyway, that didn't count like you know, when they invaded France in the south, but I have 5 battle stars, meaning I was in five major campaigns.

M.R.: Let's get a little background, you went in October, 1942?

C.W.: Well I was in reserve at that time, and I went on active in July of '43. I was in enlisted reserve corps. I was in law school at the time and I just didn't get called, then finally in March of '43 I was called into active duty, but (laughs) the law school, because I was in my 5th semester out of the 6 and because of the war, they would allow law students to take the Bar Exam at the end of the 5th semester instead of waiting until the end of the 6th semester. So anyway I got called in March of '43 to active duty, and the law school said well, we will ask the army if you and another fellow, a fellow student, could stay out until you take the Bar Exam in June of '43. I thought**,** come on, they aren't going to pay any attention to you on that (laughs) and they wrote down to Governor's Island or someplace like that, and they wrote back, by all means let these young men take the Bar Exam, tell us when it is and we will cut their orders right afterwards, which is what they did. So we took the Bar Exam and a week or two after that, we went on active duty.

M.R.: So you actually had your law degree then?

C.W.: No, I didn't, because when I got out of service in October 1945 I had to go back to school and do that semester even though I had passed the Bar. You still had to have the time in and I actually didn't graduate from law school until January of '46.

M.R.: No kidding.

C.W.: Yes, (laughs), yes so I went back, I got out in October '45, yes I think '45, and there was time enough, you know, enough days left in that semester to qualify for attending that semester. So that's what I did and that fellow I took the Bar exam with, he came back about that same time and he also took that semester and we graduated together. There were very few left in that class left, you know. I think in our class when Cunningham and I were on active duty, I think there only were about maybe eleven students left and they were all probably 4F and like that, that's all (laughs). But I went into--well, I had basic infantry training, I went into armored. Part of the army at Fort Knox, armored tanks.

M.R.: What was it called, was it the Third Armored, was it with Patton?

C.W.: Well, it was. . . . Well**,** I took armored training along with basic infantry training at Fort Knox, which is the armored center. When I got overseas I was assigned to the 743rd Tank Battalion. Now the 743rd Tank Battalion, that was a separate battalion that would be attached to infantry divisions, as opposed to an armored division. I was never in an armored division, I was always in that separate battalion and would attach initially to the 1st Infantry Division and then we would attach to the 30th Infantry Division, and we stayed with them through the rest of the war.

M.R.: So did you have any tank training in that respect?

C.W.: I had at Fort Knox.

M.R.: No, well yes, at all, I mean.

C.W.: Yes, at Fort Knox we all were shown how to drive a tank.

M.R.: And did you do that in the war?

C.W.: Yes, my first assignment I was a bow gunner in the tank. A bow gunner is the assistant driver so to speak. The bow gunner is probably the lowest form of humanity that ever was.

M.R.: What do you mean?

C.W.: (laughs) You would take over for the driver if something happened to the driver. So at first I was the bow gunner in the tank for a number of months really.

M.R.: Was it a Sherman tank you're talking about?

C.W.: No, well, yes, we had three companies of Sherman tanks, medium tanks, one company of light tanks

and I spent very little time with the medium tanks, I was assigned to D Company, Dog Company which was a company of light tanks. Light tanks have a crew of 4; medium has a crew of 5. The difference in a medium is you have a driver, a bow gunner, a loader, a gunner, and a tank commander. Light tanks: driver, bow gunner, gunner, and tank commander. Tank commander in a light tanks had to fulfill the function of a loader because you would have a ready box for the shell, you could slam it into the breech and the gunner would be to the side of the gun, manipulating it around. So first I was a bow gunner, then the driver of the tank I was in moved to one of the medium companies, that's when I became the driver in--let's see when: I came to the 743rd in July of I think '44 in Normandy. Now the battalion of the unit I was in went in on D-Day, I did not go in on D-Day, it was sometime later I went from England to Normandy. So I say initially I was a bow gunner in July '44, then in October I was the driver of the tank.

M.R.: Where were you then, in October?

C.W.: In October?

M.R.: Yes, were you in Northern France?

C.W.: No, I think by that time we had been through Northern France and through Belgium. By that time in October I think we were through the Siegfried Line just into Germany.

M.R.: So then right before the Bulge, the Battle of the Bulge?

C.W.: The Bulge didn't start until December 19…

M.R.: (interrupts) So where were you when the Bulge started and what were your impressions, I mean when the German counter-attack began, where were you and what were you doing?

C.W.: Well we were in Germany. We were just north of Aachen. Aachen had been a hell of a battle, a big fight.

M.R.: Were you involved in that battle?

C.W.: Yes, you know, it would be a big area around Aachen and surrounding areas, Huertgen Forest and we were, I can't think of all the names now, Colshide(sp), we were probably not far from Cologne, North Germany and we were in the First Army. We were moved then to the 9th, we were waiting to cross what was known as the Roer River. They had some dams in North Germany and they were afraid that the Germans were going to…

M.R.: Destroy them?

C.W.: …Shell those dams, you know, break them to flood the whole area to make it almost impossible for infantry and certainly for tanks to get across that area towards the Rhine. So we were somewhat to the northeast of the Ardennes in Belgium and waiting to cross the Roer River, hoping to get across before they

burst the dams, and that's when we had quite a setback. I remember that all of a sudden we were told to pack up, we were moving out and that would have been the 19th of December. By that time I was the tank commander, I went fast when I moved up from bow gunner to driver to tank commander. At that time in early December our tank commander had had enough, couldn't keep anything down, shell-shocked I guess you could call it, and he couldn't do anything. I was driving at the time and the gunner we had was a very good, experienced man so we could kind of operate the tank because he [tank commander] couldn't do anything, and we thought, you know, it was a poor deal for him. So they did take him out and after he left they made me tank commander. So then we packed up and down to the Bulge we go. We had to go down, you know, past Aachen; I think we went through Aachen and to the northern part of the Bulge. We were in the Malmedy -Stavelot area of the Bulge, there were some bad things happening in Malmedy, that's where the Germans…

M.R.: (interrupts) You were going through there before that incident took place though, right?

C.W.: We were there before, well I say before, we were in the area before it happened. I don't think we were in Malmedy at the time but they left the bodies of those guys there for a while to make sure everyone saw them, they would be frozen anyway, but they wanted to make sure everyone saw the atrocity, that would work you up. Stavelot was a bad place too. SS were in Stavelot, they would just kill people, they were a bad crowd and we were near St. Vith, Stavelot, Malmedy, in through there. After the Bulge, well, we went back into where we had prepared to cross the Roer, we crossed the Rhine then I'd say in April. There was very little resistance and we moved fast, always kept on the move and we carried infantry on the tanks and they would ride. There was very little resistance one and two troop actions and we were going to the Elbe River and we ended up in a place called Magdeburg, that was once a big town, once the home of the kings of Prussia or something like that, Magdeburg on the line where they agreed the limit as far as the US army would go and left and the rest open for the Russians, we were about forty miles from Berlin. We got there on May 1st and the war ended on May 8th officially, but we didn't go any further, it was wide open we could have walked right into Berlin. They weren't going to oppose us. The Germans I think would have let us into Berlin.

M.R.: They were afraid of the Russians.

C.W.: Oh man.

M.R.: Did you ever meet any Russians?

C.W.: Yes, we met Russians.

M.R.: What was your impression of them?

C.W.: Well, (laughs) the only time we saw them, after we were there and the war ended, now we're in what ultimately became the Russian zone. So we would be in a place for a while and then we would have to move out as the Russians would come in and take over. We kept moving on, I recall, south all the time, so we were in a place called Plauen(sp), it was a big city, a good-sized city, and there was a POW camp there. The POW camp had German SS and German Wehrmacht, just regular guys drafted and put in and so they knew that the

Russians were coming and going to take over that area too. So they worked like crazy discharging the Wehrmacht guys, but they didn't find time to…What's the word I'm groping for? Well administer to the SS getting them out.

M.R.: So was this the Americans?

C.W.: The Americans, yes, were in charge of the camp you see, and they were getting these Wehrmacht guys out because somehow they sensed what was going to happen once those Russians got there and nobody cared about the SS troops, so they just didn't do a thing about them because they were too busy doing all the paperwork for the Wehrmacht guys to get them out. As it turned out, our unit, the 743rd tank battalion, was the last group in the town and I remember people were around the town, they didn't fear the Americans at all. As I recall, I think it was a Sunday morning and must have been some communists in the city of Plauen clashed downtown I guess with the residents, I kind of forgot how that was. But, we got called to break up this sort of riot and everything; oh they were going at it fighting!

M.R.: Were these civilian communists, German communists?

C.W.: They must be, yes. Anyway it was some sort of confrontation with these two cultures and it was kind of fun breaking it up, we could belt somebody if we wanted to (laughs). I can remember standing there kind of calmed down, there's an old German that came up to me and he's shaking his head saying "You Americans, you always fight the wrong people," he feared those Russians, and I never forgot that, he said, "You Americans, you always fight the wrong people." Anyway because the next day the Russians were coming in to take over, to take over the camp and the whole bit and I happened to be with the last group that was there because we had to turn the key over to the…

M.R.: No kidding, the Soviets?

C.W.: Prisoner of War camp there (laughs) they knew the Russians were coming, so that morning there wasn't a soul on the streets: nobody. Even the shades were pulled! They knew what was going on and they knew what was going to happen. They knew that the Russians would send you to the dregs. What got me was that we waited and we could see them coming, in of all things Horse Drawn vehicles! It was like Indian wikki-wakkis or something of that sort. The Russians had weapons and they came down in combat "rate" on each side of the street and along the curbs. The troops on one side were watching the other side; looking for snipers or whatever danger there may be. The same thing was happening on the opposite side of the street. One would think that combat was on, but by then it would have been over for several weeks. And then we saw the colonel coming. I always liked to go to the movies and I immediately discovered that he looked just like the Russian colonel that would be portrayed at the movies. He was stern, stocky and stereotypical, of course he did not know a lot of English and we did not know a lot of Russian. However, we just had him to keep and nobody said anything! But I must confess that I was very happy to get out of there. It was rather eerie in that town. There never was a sound. All you could hear was the sound of horses' hooves. The horses would be clomping over the people.

MR: They must have been rather scared.

CW: The residents had big problems.

MR: Like what? Murder, rape…

CW: The Russians would steal everything and they did rape the women.

MR: What happened to the SS men at the camp?

CW: I believe those guys were transported to Russia…

MR: Siberia?

CW: Yes, Siberia. They were put to work in the salt mines. But you could hardly blame the Russians after what the Germans did to them during the Russian campaign. The Germans were just as bad. In fact they were BAD, rather vicious.

MR: Well the Russians did have a vengeance; they lost twenty million people.

CW: Yes they did.

MR: I have been to the Soviet Union a couple of times, when it was still the Soviet Union.

CW: Yes.

MR: I have been to Leningrad, the mass cemeteries, the eternal flames and the hero cities. They do not let you forget, and you should not forget.

CW: You are right. They lost twenty million people. Can you imagine such a thing?

MR: As you said, when the Russians came to Germany: Watch out!

CW: I also understand a lot of the reasons for the Iron Curtain. The Russians did not want the common Russian soldier to see all the advantages of Western Civilization, such as the modern conveniences. Even in the rubble you could tell that Germany had been a progressive nation, as opposed to France. I was not impressed with what I saw in France. The Germans were a methodical and talented people. There was another problem because of the way Clemenceau, Orland and David Lloyd George wanted revenge on Germany. The retribution they demanded of Germany; it was not wise.

MR: No, it was not. So, do you remember where you were when the War ended?

CW: I was in Magdeburg, which is on the Elbe River.

MR: On May eighth?

CW: Yes, on May eighth. I can remember that on the first or second of May, our Company commander, whom we called, "Cowboy" Henderson (laughs). I don't know why we called him that. But he was from Georgia. Anyways, he called the whole company into some kind of great hall that the place we were in had. He told us, "Boys, the War is over!" Nobody said a word. Nobody said a word. I suppose that we were not going to allow ourselves to have hope or a good feeling. We had been in combat too long.

MR: Yes, so you could not really think?

CW: We couldn't really feel anything. We were afraid to show any kind of elation because we would think, " Is this really true? We better wait and see." We did not trust things at that time. Nobody said a word.

MR: At that time would you have been around twenty-three or twenty-four?

CW: I would have been twenty-four. I would have been in combat for nine months. That is a long time to survive. To survive nine months was to survive a hundred years. I could not even remember my former life. I would say to myself, "Gee, did I really live in Johnstown, New York?" "Did I actually know people there?" or, "Has it always been this weird!" (smiles)

MR: Did you ever have any close calls? You must have had some.

CW: Yes, I did have some close calls.

MR: Was your tank ever hit?

CW: No, my tank was never hit.

MR: Really? That has to be quite rare for being in combat for nine months.

CW: (Pauses) Well, I suppose so. When I was still a bow gunner, we thought we were hit once. We had run into a situation where we did not know there was armor. So, of course, we ran into it, and we took cover in some woods. Of course, the Germans had the woods zeroed in! (laughs) So the Germans are dumping all sorts of big shells into the woods. A shell had exploded on the right side of our tank. But artillery will not hurt you that much in the tank if you are buttoned up. But concussion can hurt you, if it is close and you are buttoned up. The pressure created can kill you somehow. Did you know that? But anyway, the shell came in and struck. Then all of the sudden there was a lot of smoke in the tank. Schulte said, "Jeez we are hit! We got to get out of here!" If a tank is hit, you have about three seconds to get out. The reason why you only have three seconds is because if the tank is hit, the ammunition in the tank will be set off and the tank will blow up! So we see all the smoke and we know what will happen. Naturally we would have to get out. So, remembering to open the hatch, I started out along with the driver. The tank commander and the gunner got out through the turret and scrambled behind the tank somehow. So Earl Dance, the driver, and I start up out of the tank, and here comes another shell! **KABOOM!** (Imitates explosion and laughs.) It was very close! (laughs) So we say, "Jeez we have to get back down in! What are we going to do! They are shelling outside and the tank is going to blow up!" Fortunately, it was not any kind of direct hit. A shell had exploded next to the tank and had

made it lurch. (laughs) So we backed down into the tank, looking at each other and we panicked. We figured the tank was going to go up any minute. But it was not hit.

MR: How did you get out of that scrape?

CW: Well we realized that the tank was not hit because it would have been burning by then. So we just stayed in the tank and sat out the artillery barrage. (laughs) I think the only causality from the entire group was a kid from Chicago who lost his hearing because of concussion. I thought, "What a lucky guy!" They took him out of combat and he was going home. But he is still alive. You would give your hearing or anything to get out of combat alive. (laughs) Have you ever heard the expression, "Million dollar wound?" (laughs)

MR: Yes, I have.

CW: You prayed for a million dollar wound! Anything! "Well, I lost an arm but I'm alive. Hooray!" (slaps knee, laughing boisterously) That is ridiculous, but that was the way it was. There was another time I got into trouble also. Tanks should always have infantry with them. If you are in the tank you cannot go scouting…

MR: (interrupts) See all the way around…

CW: (interrupts) That is right as well. So wherever you go, there should be infantry available. But, there are always goof-ups. One time we were supposed to take this little town. It was a little hamlet out in the country, like Fort Ann, but smaller. So, we are waiting to go, drawn up, and in the column. The infantry that were going with us were near-by. Some of the infantry would pile on the deck of each tank. Others would walk along with the tanks. However, we were not going anywhere. There was a delay and it was staring to get dark. This would have been around November. This also was the mission that did Schulte in. At the time I was a tank driver. This was just before I became a tank commander, probably because of this incident. Finally, at dusk, someone yells, "All right, c'mon, let's move these tanks out! Let's Go!" So we went to go and take the town. From where we were to the town, there was a wide, open area on both sides. It was like an old dirt road; it looked rather traveled. We have to go down this road to take the town. We knew that the Germans had the road zeroed in. Common sense tells you not to go to a place where it is wide open during combat. But they made us go down the road anyway and away we went. Our best bet to come through unscathed was to race down the road. With a light tank we could get it up to about forty miles-per-hour…

MR: (interrupts) With the right terrain…

CW: That is right. We could get the tank going pretty good! (laughs) There were five tanks in our platoon. In a company there are three platoons of tanks. So we go down the road, but we leave the infantry behind! They made us move down that road and we left the infantry far behind. So, we are racing down the road and I have not been a driver for very long. We also had a new bow gunner. On the bow gunner's side (left) of the tank are the levers for driving the tank. If you could not drive from the left side then you would have to pull the levers down to the right side. So I asked the bow gunner, "Do you know about moving the levers?" and he replied, "Yes." In a tank you can pull down the hatch. Inside the hatch is the periscope. If you think I could

have seen much out of that periscope, you are crazy! I never could see anything, so when I drove I always had the hatch open! I could let the seat down, and just stick my eyes out so I could see without putting myself in too much danger. I could most certainly use the levers too! (laughs, while imitating how he drove his tank) So there I was and I said to the bow gunner, "If I get hit you are going to have to pull the levers down **so** you can keep the tank going." As I said, the Germans had the road zeroed in. Of course, as we were going, artillery shells are hitting and some were hitting quite close. As a result, shrapnel, rocks and dirt would come flying into the tank through the open hatch. There would be an explosion and there would be a clatter and a crack! (laughs) I would see the bow gunner reaching for the levers and I would have to tell him, "No, no I am not hit yet!" (laughs) So we made it to the town. We pulled up to about a three- or four-story structure and I pulled around. The firing was coming from that direction (points towards the camera) so I put the building between where the firing was coming from and where I put the tank. At that point we were all buttoned up, including myself. The Germans kept throwing artillery all night long. The shells were hitting the buildings and we could hear the bricks falling down on the tank. We knew we had no infantry, we knew that we were caught and we knew that we could not get out due to the volume of artillery. During the night I realized that I was going to die. When I accepted this I felt peaceful, there was nothing that I could do. I cannot explain it but to say that I was not troubled nor panic-stricken. In fact, I was quiet. Everyone in the tank was quiet. We all just sat in the tank. During the night, I heard poor Schulte, who was up in the turret behind me, say, "What did a man ever do to deserve this." Well, I got to thinking about some of the things that I had regretted doing. I thought, "Jeez, I hope all these guys never find out all the bad things that I have done that I am getting paid back for and what they are suffering for!" (laughs) Honest to God that is all I thought about! "Jeez I hope they never…" or "Man, I wish I had never done *that*! That is why I am probably paying for this and these poor guys, I hope they never find out that this was all my fault!" But we survived the night!

MR: Did all five tanks survive?

CW: They all survived. The Germans did not come in and take us. I had figured that they would come in and finish us off with grenades. But they never did come.

Walsh Interview 2

PART 2

Carrol Walsh: We were shelled all day long the next day. We don't move, we can't move. We were shelled all the next night.

Matthew Rozell: Wow. Were you still in the tank?

CW: Still in the tank. If you had to go to the bathroom you could use your helmet to pee in. Try to get that hatch open and throw it out. That's all you could do. I think we had, you know, those K-rations. They were packages you'd have canned with like meatloaf or something. Bad stuff. Cheese. That cheese, (puts head in hand) you could hardly chew it (laughs). Anyway, we were shelled all that day and all the next night. And then the following day, I can't remember now if it let up a little bit...but we moved from where we were. You

know that rubble was all around. And we went to a great big building and I think all the tanks went in with me. It would put your mind, as I can recall, like a big airplane hanger of some kind. I don't know what it was, but we got in there under cover. And you know, planes would come over and they couldn't see you. I think we got so shelled that day after we moved in, that it was over. That's all. But you were a little shaky after that because they're so methodical you could time it. They were famous for that…you're probably aware of that, aren't you, that they were famous for being methodical in what they did.

MR: Oh yes.

CW: Very methodical. But here's this place…Fronhoven. That was the name of that place, Fronhoven. The reason I remember is because the fellow that was the gunner of my tank…we still keep in contact. I got a battlefield commission and so did he, later on. He got his own tank. Anyway, that happened because people get killed and they take their place. But anyway, what was I going to say? Like I say, I never figured, like I say, here's this little dump of a hamlet…why did they keep shelling? What did they think was there? Maybe they thought that there was a plan by the units there to have a big push from this place so they were going to break up or stop the attack of several divisions or something. Anyway, why they kept shelling that same area…

MR: It's a waste of a lot of ammunition.

CW: Yes, and they never came in.

MR: When would that have been? Would that have been '44 or '45?

CW: That was '44. It was November of '44.

MR: Yes.

CW: November of '44, just before Thanksgiving.

MR: So you were pushing north then?

CW: We were…

MR: Going northeast?

CW: Well we were going northeast yes. Yes, we were in Germany…that was in Germany. Oh, yes. That was toward, you know, going toward that Roer River and everything.

MR: As you were pushing through did you ever encounter Germans who had surrendered?

CW: Yes. From time to time we would get through somewhere and they couldn't get anywhere and they would give up or we would just hold them there. Somebody would be assigned to march them back to some little area, I don't know where…back behind. Later in the war of course, they gave up in droves. ... Can I tell you a funny story about that?

MR: Sure.

CW: This would have been near the end of the war. We were on a roadblock. I don't even know why the hell we were on the roadblock then. But anyway, we were. I remember our tank was at the crossroads and there was a nice great big tree with a lot of leaves…a beautiful big tree. There was a warehouse-like building to the left and I had the tank parked underneath this tree up against that warehouse facing the road down that way. It would be late in April…warm, it was a nice day. I sat out on top of the tank. You had to take turns on

guard you might say. But during the day 'most everybody would be around, at night we would try an hour…yes I think we would take our guard duty…somebody always had to be on duty of one hour on and three hours off. You can't sleep much on that three hours but anyway, during the day somebody always had to be there on the tank when it was parked. But it was a nice day out; I can see it yet. I'm looking down the road and I thought I heard a sound. It was a whole column of Germans walking down. I was just sitting there because it was warm and nice and now our weapon was a Tommie gun, a Thompson submachine gun. My Tommie gun was in the turret somewhere…I did have a .45 revolver and I guess I had that on. But anyway, I look down and here come these Krauts. I could tell by their walk that they're not going to do any fighting. I couldn't even see any guns. I remember I thought "Oh boy, here's my chance. There may be some P-38s or that other famous German [automatics]…

MR: Luger?

CW: Luger.

MR: You could get a souvenir?

CW: Well yes, but you could sell them to the Air Corps. They would pay you a thousand dollars.

MR: Oh really?

CW: Oh yes. Well they had money in the Air Force, but they couldn't get this stuff, these souvenirs. So they didn't know what to do with them when they had them. And of course I would want a P-38 myself, but if I had the chance to sell them…so anyway, all of them must have been fifty guys in that column. There had to be (laughing). I got off the tank and I ran down the road toward them you know, and they saw me coming and they stopped. I think they said, "surrender" in American, maybe they said "Kamerad," I don't know. Oh I know what they said, " Prisoner! Prisoner!" Prisoners, they want to be prisoners. "Prisoner, prisoner." I said "Ok." I said "Pistolen?" "Kein pistolen, Kein pistolen!" (Waving his arms in the air) You know they're not going to have any guns. They're assuring me that they're free of guns and they're not going to be any trouble or anything. "Kein pistolen? Kein prisoner! The hell with you." I turned my back on them and walked away. They start trotting right up behind me, "Prisoner, prisoner" (laughing). So I stop again and I said "Pistolen?" "Kein, kein." "Go on!" I said, and I start back down with my back to them, no gun or anything. They came trotting after me so finally I said "All right, Achtung! Achtung!". Now I could see they were not these great German warriors, believe me. They had been kids and old men just pulled in you know? "Achtung!" Boy, they did do that. I said "Ok, forward march". They knew what that meant. " Hup, hup." Boy, we marched right down to the crossroad and around the corner was a CP, a command post. I marched them there and left them. But there was no one, there was no officer there as I recall. But you had to see them trotting after me when I turned but no I said, "No, kein prisoner, you can't have that".

MR: That's funny.

CW: That's funny, that's funny, well…things like that kept us going... But other than that I guess I would have close calls like that every day…not every day, but when you encountered stuff flying at you, sure you had a problem.

MR: Did you ever have contact with the German population, civilians?

CW: No because we were always on the line. We never really got pulled off the line and so they had pretty much…you know when we got somewhere because it was battle going on, the people had pretty much gotten out of there. I recall that we'd get into a place and the population had been…they'd gone…they knew what I suppose was coming. Did I see people taking their…I would see people like coming our way carrying their clothes.

MR: Refugees…people whose houses had been destroyed or trying to flee the fight.

CW: I guess. Yes, trying to get out of there. Yes once in a while, but I mean we would be on the go. We didn't bother them. Like I say, that guy that day that I had contact with in Plauen after the war when he said, "You Americans always fight the wrong people." But in the actual fighting of the war, no, we weren't. Now at one point when we were in the Bulge, believe it or not, it was in Malmedy. This would have been in December or early January of…you know late December of '44 or early January of '45. While we were in Malmedy, things had quieted in the latter stages of the Bulge. We would go out during the day…it was like going to work. About eight o'clock in the morning we'd be called and we'd have to go someplace like to relieve troops. I remember one day there was some infantry who had run into a firefight with some Germans. All infantry and I guess no armor. They didn't want to send our light tanks against German armor because 37-millimeter guns were all we had on the light tanks, 75-millimeter on the mediums. Those Germans had the 88. That gun was the greatest gun that ever was, the 88. They used it for anti-aircraft, they used it for artillery, and they used it on the tanks. Anti-tank gun, everything. That thing…they could fire an 88 and I guess it could go two miles and still go through a tank. I think so; it was a long way. Anyhow like for example there was a group of Americans wounded and they were pinned down somehow. So we were told, "You have to go up and clean out that nest of Germans and get those wounded back." So we would, we'd go up and we'd have our firepower and infantry who couldn't do anything about that, the German infantry…and then we'd give help. But then we'd pull back at night, but it got to some point we were able to pull back into Malmedy and they said "Look if you can find a place to sleep or stay, go ahead". It was in Malmedy, we went to this house, it would be just like you see in the pictures, and you know how those kind of French houses you know would be like three stories you know it would be and everything. We went there and I can remember…and I could speak a little French from high school. We had our bow gunner at the time, "Hot Lips" Havelock. I can't remember Hot Lips' first name now. He could speak some German so we were in good shape. We could walk on to things you see. So I said "Avez vous…" what's bed? Lit, or something like that. "Avez vous lit pour quatre hommes?" (Have you got a bed for four men?) This woman was very nice and we stayed in her home. We hadn't had a bed in months. My God she had those big comforter feather bed type of things or whatever (laughing). When they could get rations to us we weren't too bad because they'd have for tanks, for the tankers…we could have five in one rations in a big box and they'd have things like bacon in one and some kind of meat or something. They weren't bad rations. Well the stuff that she had, she was in bad shape because they didn't have much to eat in those areas and everything. She would take that stuff and fix it up. We could hardly eat some of that crap. But she would fix it and cook for us and we'd stay there. She had I think two sons, not three. I think as I can remember two sons… and of course where that Malmedy was, that is, sort of on the border between Germany and Belgium. The two sons were in the German army.

MR: No kidding.

CW: Oh yes. And I think they were on the Russian front. So you can imagine what that was. But anyway that woman was so nice to us and we were nice to her too. And you know we gave her as much food as we could get. We were there about maybe three or four days I guess. I can't remember. But that was a contact, but she was Flemish, you know, Belgian. She was a nice woman. Oh yes two boys…wasn't that something? There she was taking care of us with two boys in the…

MR: Well she probably wanted it to be over too.

CW: But that Bulge, one of the worst things in the Bulge was the cold.

MR: Yes.

CW: It was so cold. Have you talked to any…

MR: Oh I have. The frostbite…

CW: And we had no winter clothes.

MR: A lot of those guys were out in the open.

CW: Yes, oh yes. We had to stay in…we lived in the tank. You couldn't go to like Malmedy at that time. But initially there was no place to go. You were out in the field and you didn't know what was what because they had Germans dressed in GI uniforms, you know about that…

MR: Yes.

CW: You were just so confused; you didn't know who was who. And of course it wasn't very comfortable being in the tank in that cold, on cold steel. You were not very warm. We would take our shoes off sometimes to rub our feet so they wouldn't freeze. It was so cold, but we had no winter clothes. They hadn't figured on that you see so they had. . . . As I have since read winter clothes were not a priority when they got the ports because the army was moving so well that the hell with that, we're going to get through with this by Christmas. And put the food and the shells and the ammunition and things like that and so we had no overshoes. I was lucky: I had like a sweatshirt you know, it was a like an undershirt. I had that and I had OD pants, you know, wool uniform pants. I had a pair of coveralls and I had a sweater, and my combat jacket. And I found a scarf…

MR: What about gloves?

CW: We had gloves but they weren't warm.

MR: Yes.

CW: They were not warm. The funny thing, my father was a leather sorter in a glove shop in Johnstown and he sent me a beautiful pair of heavy mittens and that was great except when…I wrote to him and I said "Gee Dad that was great. They're nice and warm…the only problem, no trigger finger." (Laughs) Of course with a machine gun, on a 30 caliber machine-gun you fanned it--anyway you didn't pull the trigger. You just kind of hit the…and you hit it easy because you couldn't keep it going in bursts…in bursts. But the gloves, yes they gave us gloves but they were not warm enough in that climate. We had those but no winter clothes, no overshoes. Now some guys that came in later for replacement…Yes they had some things and they gave them overcoats. Of course they couldn't wear overcoats with the tank. You couldn't get in and out…. You could not maneuver…You couldn't get in and out of the turret or out of the bow gunner side with an overcoat….heavy overcoat….well any ways…that's what I had. Oh cold…oh man alive.

MR: Remember the cold?

CW: Never was so cold ever in my life…ever….And it just stayed cold day and night….I mean how are you going to get warm? The infantry guys digging their holes…That was tough because the ground was frozen. Boy, they had to chop. That's where they lived. They lived in their holes and we lived in the tank. (laughs)

MR: That was a pretty brutal winter,too, I guess?

CW: Oh I guess!

MR: One of the worst that they had there in memory.

CW: Oh, terrible! Oh I have never ever been that cold. It really was brutal. And I never got over it. I think Dorothy, my spouse, thinks maybe that's why I mind the cold so much to this day.

MR: You don't like the cold?

CW: Oh God, I can't take it. But if that had anything to do with it I don't know…. Probably not. That's a long time ago. But man…

MR: But to live through that for a month or at least more than a month.

CW: Oh it was. Oh yeah….December 19th to the end of January/February…yeah, yeah… Well you kind of got me yapping here. I didn't…

MR: I have some more questions for you.

CW: Oh all right.

MR: Did you ever run into any American POW's after they had been liberated or see any camps where they were as you were pushing through Germany? Any prisoners of war that the Germans had? Or any concentration camps or anything like that?

CW: Well, I don't recall…. Somehow in the back of my mind near the end of the war as we were moving in towards Berlin. As I recall we would see some former POW's who had, because we overran places, they were walking back toward the rear. But I don't recall ever…I don't recall talking to them, but in the back of my mind I remember now seeing the kind of columns.

MR: They were going in one direction and you were going towards the…

CW: Yeah, the action. And we knew they were free and were on their way back to be taken care of. Now, after the war was over, we participated in transporting Polish and Russian slave laborers. They would be someplace. And we would put them in trucks to transport them to some other destination on their way back home. I can remember particular…I think they were probably Polish, maybe Russian…girls, ladies…and boy, they were husky and strong, and that's why they were there and they were not emaciated, they were big and strong and able to work. And I imagine they were agricultural workers. But I don't know that. Yes, but we did encounter those people and there they were, they had been taken from their homes and brought into Germany. I don't recall ever talking to them because you had a language barrier.

MR: Sure, yes. Have you ever been back?

CW: No.

MR: Do you have any desire to go?

CW: I would like to, but I never will now. Too old. Yes I would really like to…

MR: See some of those places?

CW: Yes, oh, I'd love to.

MR: What do you think about the German people today?

CW: I don't…

MR: Are there any feelings still there? I mean what did you think about them then? They were the enemy then...

CW: Yes.

MR: ...then the war ended.

CW: Yes. I can remember at the time resenting the Germans for interrupting my life, and I was very resentful about that because it brought changes in my life that I am not going to get into, which weren't always so nice.

MR: Well that must have been a pretty common feeling I would think?

CW: Yes, but I don't have any feeling of antipathy toward the German people now at all. But I do towards the Japanese. I don't like the Japs. I didn't like them then, I don't like them now. I don't trust them. And as far as the Germans are concerned, I would want them on my side now.

MR: Sure.

CW: I had admiration, I think, for the way they could fight.

MR: Well they certainly had it down, didn't they?

CW: Didn't they? Boy they were good.

MR: I've spoken to a lot of gentlemen who were in the Pacific Theater, and a lot of them feel the same way you do.

CW: Yes.

MR: As far as what they had to go through. And another standard question I'll ask is do you remember where you were and how you felt when you heard that the war…well, that the atomic bombs had been dropped? Were you in Germany then?

CW: No, I was on my way home. I was in La Havre, France, when the first bomb was dropped.

MR: And were you to be shipped home or were you to be shipped over in that general direction?

CW: I was to be shipped home, get a thirty day furlough, report back to Fort Knox, from Fort Knox to the Pacific Coast, from the Pacific Coast to the Philippines, and then be assigned as a platoon leader of a platoon of tanks for the invasion of Japan. That's where I was on my way. Couldn't believe it and I had all kinds of combat experience, which was why I was being shipped. I couldn't believe it. And of course I could not have survived any more. I was a fugitive from the law of averages, as it was.

MR: That's a good saying.

CW: (laughs) And they weren't smart. I'll tell you something. They weren't smart about assigning me to lead some platoon in the invasion of Japan because I think I would have found a way to put sand in the oil tank or something. Good lord. You know enough is enough.

MR: Yes...

CW: Yes, I was a little resentful about that. But I got the thirty days and because the war had ended by then, and they extended it to forty-five days, I had a forty-five day furlough. I did report back to Fort Knox. I had enough points to get out and I got out.

MR: I see.

CW: And was I glad to drop the bomb, you bet your life. And I am so glad to this day that they dropped that bomb. (laughs) And I have no problem with it. None. Morally, ethically, whatever.

MR: That's interesting. I am reading the book "Duty" by a…well, it's a book by a journalist who went out and he met Paul Tibbets, commander of the "Enola Gay."

CW: Yes, yes, yes.

MR: It's pretty interesting because he's in his early eighties now.

CW: Yes.

MR: And of course he's a retired general. He talked about his feelings, morally, ethically. We had a job to do, and we had to get it done.

CW: Yes we did.

MR: But surprisingly, he doesn't have any bad feelings for the Japanese people. In fact, he drives a Toyota.

CW: Is that right?

MR: Yes. Isn't that something?

CW: Which I never would do.

MR: No?

CW: No. No. No, sir. I don't want anything to do with 'em.

MR: Have you seen the movie, "Pearl Harbor"?

CW: No.

MR: Do you plan on seeing it?

CW: No.

MR: Why?

CW: I…uh…nor did I see "Saving Private Ryan."

MR: No, you didn't see that one?

CW: I think those things kind of bother me now that I'm older and I'm not sure that…. I don't want to go through it. I can't. It bothers me now. I'm old and…

MR: Do you think it will bring back a lot of the feelings that you had then?

CW: I don't know. I don't think I felt as bad or as squeamish about these things then as I do now.

MR: Right. Like you said…

CW: That's age. And I don't know. Just the noise and the…Yeah, I think it might bother me a little bit. But I've heard that "Pearl Harbor" wasn't the greatest movie.

MR: I haven't seen it.

CW: I've read an awful lot about it. They said "Saving Private Ryan" was very well done and quite factual or realistic.

MR: Yes that seemed pretty good. I mean I wasn't there so I couldn't tell you how realistic it was. It wasn't a John Wayne movie. Let's put it that way.

CW: NO. I can remember crossing the channel and I landed at Omaha Beach. Not on D-Day as I told you, but the thing that impressed me, and of course when I got there they didn't have any wharves, so we had to walk in through the water to the beach. And I looked at those cliffs and then…

MR: All the pillboxes.

CW: And I couldn't believe it. How the hell do these guys…

MR: They had every square inch of that beach zeroed in methodically like you said.

CW: Yes, and I can remember we crossed the beach and went up winding paths of mining, that still had some of mines that you had to be careful. They had marked where they were and they had to pass through…That was very impressive to me. (laughs)

MR: I'm sure it was.

CW: But I just happened to think about looking at that. I couldn't believe it. Could not believe it. I don't know how they did it?

MR: And they did it.

CW: A couple of tanks of the 743rd tank battalion were quite instrumental in helping to save the situation that day, by the way. And they don't mention that much. I read that somewhere too. [The battalion received a Presidential Unit Citation for that action.—GCG]

MR: They were unloading tanks on D-Day?

CW: 743rd tanks go in on D-Day. Oh yes. On the beach. Oh yes.

MR: And they got landed by the LST's and…

CW: Whatever. Yes, yes.

MR: Just to get them off the beach

CW: Yes.

MR: We have quite a few gentlemen who were there on June 6th in this area.

CW: That hit the beach you mean?

MR: Yes, that hit the beach or right off the beach or a couple of them were in the Coast Guard. They played a pretty important role transporting things back and forth.

CW: Yes, right. That's the amazing thing that so many survived. Gee, you wonder, (laughs) my God, how

could anybody get out of this. But more got out than didn't.

MR: Well that's the big thing about the Americans though. These Germans were so methodical that sometimes when their head did get cut off they were paralyzed as far as a commanding officer, where as your junior officers and even some of your enlisted men, were taking control of the situation as it deteriorated because they knew it was that or die.

CW: Yes, sure.

MR: That's part of the reason I think they did get off the beach that day. There's no question about that.

CW: Yes, the American enlisted man could take over.

MR: Right.

CW: Not so much in Germans.

MR: But that was their whole system I think too. They're from such an authoritarian, by the book, do it this way, whereas the Americans were just a little more inventive I guess.

CW: Yes, casual about some things, but more independent in their culture.

MR: Exactly, and their whole thinking.

CW: Yes, right.

MR: We're ready to take orders but ready to take control too over the time being.

CW: Yes, yes.

MR: (to student cameraman) Can you think of any questions you want to ask your grandpa? Have you heard these stories before?

Student: Not all of them, some of them. I remember the cold. He goes down to Florida in the winter because he doesn't like the cold.

MR: Sure, it gets cold up here. Doesn't it. Well that's great. I interview gentlemen from this community, and recently I ran into your daughter and she told me about you, and your son-in-law. They told me you didn't like the Japanese. I had to ask that question too.

CW: (laughs) You wanted to confirm that. (laughs) You did. It's a different culture. It's the oriental mind. But how people can treat other people like they did. Now I know what Hitler and that crowd did to the Jewish people and the older I get, the more that gets to me. Another movie, "Schindler's List," I can't see that anymore.

MR: I saw it once and that's enough for me.

CW: I don't want to see any of those things any more

MR: No, you can't.

CW: I don't want to back away but I just can't, and Dorothy's the same way, we can't…

MR: …can't fathom it.

CW: No. You can't. How could anybody do such a thing? But it would be one thing if they just decided to kill them, but to degrade them, to treat them, to put them in those camps. And to do what they did and treat them like…Gee, man. And the Japs were the same way, but they did it, look what they did to the Chinese and Koreans. And absolute cruelty. God. Sadistic.

MR: All that's in things you read about. They got a hold of an American prisoner during a battle. Things that they would do.

CW: Pardon?

MR: I was reading a book on Iwo Jima, Flag of Our Fathers.

CW: I want to read that.

MR: That was a good read.

CW: Yes

MR: But there's some passages in there that will definitely be disturbing, because it's told by the son of the Navy corpsman, who was one of the flag raisers and he was the one who led the most stable life afterwards. And three of that six were killed before they got off the island.

CW: Yes. Yes.

MR: And the other two, one of them drank himself to death ten years later. And the other one just kind of faded into oblivion. Didn't live too much…. I think he died in his seventies. The last one was the one who went home and lived in a nice community, but he would never talk about it.

CW: Yes.

MR: Reporters would call him up to talk about it.

CW: Yes. Right.

MR: Because they had to go on big tour, the war bond tour. They get called right home for that to raise the money. Once the picture was taken. And he passed away and the story is by the son going back tracing his father's footsteps and just getting the stories and piecing together the life stories of these six guys that were drawn together by that one quirky moment.

CW: Yes. Yes.

MR: It's a good book.

CW: Right. Yes. Yes. I want to read that.

MR: But after you read it you're not going to feel any different about the Japanese. That will just confirm them. You already harbor deep down inside.

CW: Well the guy that lives down the street from me in Florida was a prisoner. He was a Bataan guy.

MR: Was he? The Death March.

CW: And he was a mineworker. Worked in the mines.

MR: Slave labor.

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CW: Earl Henkin. He was the nicest guy. You would never know. He was friendly, fun, had a good life, and a nice family. But I don't think he is too happy about some movies. Japs, and the way they treated him you know.

MR: Yes. I got a hold of the son of a gentleman that passed away twenty years ago. He lived in Glens Falls. His son forwarded me his story. He was on one of those hell ships. Where the Japanese were transporting them to Japan because the American were closing in. 750 guys on it, Americans. Of course the Japanese hadn't marked the vessels. They were down in this tank, and down in these holds for weeks at a time.

CW: They would get strafed.

MR: Well they got sunk, they got hit by an American torpedo.

CW: Okay.

MR: His father was one of 83 guys who managed to survive.

CW: No kidding, see isn't that amazing that there would be survivors even.

MR: Exactly.

CW: What a terrible thing. They transported these guys knowing that that could happen.

MR: They knew it could happen.

CW: Sure.

MR: That would be one way to get rid of their load.

CW: That's right. Did you ever read Studs Terkel's *The Good War*?

MR: Oh yes, I have that book.

CW: I went to a book discussion about that just recently.

MR: Did you?

CW: Oh yes, in Johnstown. Johnstown library had it. It was a professor for Albany State University. His name was Adelmen, I think. We were going to have a discussion on Brokaw's book.

MR: Oh, were you?

CW: Which Adelmen found. I don't like Brokaw.

MR: Adelmen found what?

CW: He found that Brokaw's book was not the depth of Studs Terkel's.

MR: That is a masterpiece.

CW: Did you read Brokaw's?

MR: I read them both.

CW: He said that Brokaw's was kind of superficial almost.

MR: Yes I agree.

CW: That he felt that he wrote that maybe just to make a good buck on the thing.

MR: I think that he is doing the country a service in a sense though. There are a lot of people that didn't know what we went through. There are a lot of people that think that the Battle of the Bulge is a diet. Yes, there is a guy who lives here in Hudson Falls, Dan Lawler who was in the First Marine Division. He was at Peleliu and Okinawa and there's one gentleman in the book, E.B. Sledge, "Sledge Hammer".

CW: Yes, that was in the book.

MR: Well he knew him.

CW: Is that right?

MR: He lived in the tent across from him.

CW: Isn't that something?

MR: And he was a southern guy, they used to make fun of him, they used to call him rebel. They used to get him all angry.

CW: Yes.

MR: I recently saw him in a TV show too. But I guess he passed away.

CW: Yes. There was a big difference between the southern boys and the northern boys too. There was a difference. And let me tell you, they filled the combat troops with those southern boys too, baby. They wanted them in there.

MR: Why?

CW: Because they were emotional and gung ho. And they liked guns and they would go. Plus Irish, plus Italian.

MR: Well you are Irish, aren't you?

CW: Yes. They liked they Irish, they liked the Italian, and they liked the southern boys, emotional types.

MR: Oh yes.

CW: They weren't going to have too many cold calculating smart guys who know enough not to go (laughs). They want the "dumbbells" who would get all excited and go, and they got them. Oh God, you'd wonder. I've often though about that; my God why would you go? When they told you, you knew what was coming but you went.

MR: Couldn't say no.

CW: No, I guess not. There's just something about it. Well I think you had an obligation and you knew it, and you weren't going to let the guys down, that's all.

MR: That's what I keep hearing.

CW: You weren't going to do that. Weren't happy about, didn't want to go, went.

MR: Yes.

CW: Couldn't do anything else.

Daughter: Did you mention the train at all? That was kind of interesting.

CW: What?

Daughter: The train.

CW: No, I didn't tell him about the train.

MR: What was that?

CW: Well, late in the war, again that nice, beautiful April day. They were shooting like crazy across the top of Germany and a Major Benjamin of the 743rd was kind of out ahead scouting a little bit and came across some Finnish (Finland) soldiers who had been POWS. And were just wandering, they had got out of the camp because it had been overrun or whatever. They were told that there was some kind of a train approaching. I don't know whether they knew what was on that train or not. I'm not sure. But he came back to the Battalion and he pulled my tank and George Gross's out. He told us to go with him. So we did.

We came to a place where there was a long train of boxcars. My recollection is that the firemen and the engineer on the train jumped off some distance from us as we were approaching. I could remember seeing them running, and I can remember firing a 30 caliber at them. Why not, they were Germans, you know? See, every third shell in a belt is a tracer, so you can see you didn't get 'em. But anyway, I can remember pulling up alongside the train of boxcars, Gross and I, and Major Benjamin. Well as it turned out, it was a train full of concentration camp victims, prisoners. Who were being transported from one of their camps. I think it had been Belsen. I think they have been in Belsen, as I have subsequently learned, on their way to another camp.

MR: Trying to stay ahead of you guys.

CW: Yes, exactly. So there they were. My God, you know what they were. They got the doors open, and maybe they had been open from what I get from Gross. All of these people, men, women, children, jam-packed in those boxcars, I couldn't believe my eyes. And there they were. So, now they knew they were free, they were liberated. That was a nice, nice thing. I was there for a while that afternoon. You know, you got to feed these people. Give them water. They are in bad shape. Major Benjamin took some pictures, and George Gross took some pictures too. I have copies of those pictures they are down in Florida. I didn't stay there the rest of the day. I went back. I was kind of glad to go back. I thought, "I hope they get the proper authorities, the proper military companies that would take care of people like this." Well, Gross' tank had to stay there all night. Because we were with the 30th Infantry Division so long they considered the 743rd Tank Battalion as part of the 30th. In fact, at the end of the war they gave us their patch to wear on our right sleeve. Your own patch, your armored, like, or infantry patch would always be on the left sleeve of your uniform. We got the 30th Division Old Hickory on our right. I get the newsletter from the 30th Infantry Division. There was a letter, they get letters sometimes from people over in Europe, like "Do you know anything about this? I remember the Americans coming through." So, there was this letter from the young man who said he was on the death train near some place or other. He gave the date of April 1945. He wanted to know if anyone knew anything about this train. I thought, "I bet you that is that train that we came across." Well as it turned out, it was. So I wrote to the editor of the 30th Division newsletter, and I told them that Gross would know more about it because he was there all night and into the next day. There was a tank destroyer battalion near by too. They got that tank destroyer battalion to go to all the surrounding people, German people, and made them come up with food and water and everything for these people. Apparently they were some German soldiers that had been on guard of that train, and they disappeared. They weren't there when we came. They must have seen us coming. They found them later on too. So anyway, Gross has E-mailed him, he has a computer.

MR: Oh he does?

CW: This guy was 5 years old on that train, lives in London.

MR: So they got in contact with each other.

CW: And, they got in contact with each other. And I just got a whole bunch of that stuff. He sent me copies

of all the correspondence that they have had so far, about that train-Gross, my friend, who started out as a bow gunner. Ultimately came in the same crew as me, as the gunner. He later got his own tank. He was an English major, who later became a professor, ultimately. I think he taught in High School. He was a professor of English Literature, particularly of 19th century poetry, at San Diego State. He is retired. He writes likes it's a novel. When he writes to this guy, he's talking about, "You could imagine the emotion I felt when I saw these poor people in their emaciated way." Oh my God, it's beautiful the way he goes on about it. We didn't write for years. We have taken up correspondence in the last four or five years. It has been quite interesting. That was neat.

MR: Does he live in Florida?

CW: No, he lives in San Diego, California. I did see him about 5 years ago in California. We went out to see him and a boyhood friend.

MR: To meet him in particular?

CW: Yes. A boyhood friend, and Gross, they both lived in the same area. We spent about 10 days out there. We had a very nice time. We'll probably never see each other again. He won't fly.

MR: Oh yes?

CW: I didn't tell you that. He won't fly. I said, "Why the hell won't you take a train? Come see me, I went to see you."

MR: It's a long train ride too.

CW: It would be an interesting one. I would like to take that train ride. Now I would like to take that train ride, stop here and there and take my time. But, anyway that was about it. Those people got those pictures. There is a picture of a little boy, but it wasn't the guy. Gross asked him if it was him. He thought he recognized somebody. His mother was on that train, the boy's mother. His father died in Belsen I think. There was a Polish girl I think that could speak English very well that George Gross had a lot of conversation with that afternoon and that night. When he was still there. He never heard from her again. I think he knew her name, too. But whatever happened to her? But this young man, this 5-year-old, is in the medical field somehow. He was in London. They were primarily Hungarian Jews on that train. He got back to Hungary only to be confronted with the Russians.

MR: So do you have copies of those pictures?

CW: They sent me copies of them yes, In Florida.

MR: Maybe someday I can look at them.

SC: One question I have, is when you came back, you said you went back to Fort Knox; after that what did

you do? Did you go back to Johnstown?

CW: Yes, I came back and went to law school. I still had to have required time. I didn't graduate law school until January of 1946, as the class of 43'.

SC: So after that you just went on your own separate way? You never did anything with the army again?

CW: No, I didn't want to. They said when I was getting out of Fort Knox going through all of the stuff, "Ok boys, right over here boys." That's where you sign up for the reserves. So I didn't move over, and everyone else went over like a flock of sheep. So the guy said "Ok Mac over here for the reserve." I said "No thanks." He said "What do you mean you. . . aren't you going to join the reserves?" "No," I said. He said, "Why? Do you realize that you could be drafted as a private?" I said, "Let me tell you something, two things. I was a private for two years. I survived; I suspect I could survive again. But I'll tell you something else, I don't intend to be drafted again." All those guys got called back in Korea.

MR: Oh my God.

CW: Sure, if you were in the reserves. My friend Gross, Mr. G.I. Gross, of course he has to get in the reserve. Didn't he get called to serve in Korea? Fortunately he had something wrong with him. So he didn't have to go, but he got called. I was a non-combatant by the way. A non-combatant is somebody in the Army who has certain disabilities that they would not be able to participate in combat. So I was at Fort Meade near Baltimore. This was a final physical that would determine whether you would go overseas or whatever. So the kindly old doctor was there. I had my physical, which never was much. They would test your heart. He said, "Young man, I have bad news for you." I thought, "Well ok, he's going to tell me there is a boat out there in the Chesapeake Bay ready to go to Africa or Italy or someplace, and you're going to be on it in about ten minutes." But he said, "You'll never fight for your country." I thought, "That might not be so bad, I'm not going to argue too much." But he said, "I'm going to do you a favor, I'm going to let you go overseas. But they are going to have to find some non-combatant duties for you, whatever it might be, working in the office working on the wars. But I'm going to do you a favor and let you go over the seas." So I went overseas, and that's the last day I ever heard about any job except getting combat. It just kept moving until I reached the 743rd Tank Battalion. On my service record it says non-combatant. They would get that out every once in a while. Wise guys (the company clerk, or the first sergeant), they would say stuff like, "Now gentlemen I want you to know that we have a real hero among us. Someone who does not have to be here but who has volunteered to give his all." Then they would go into detail. Of course I would acknowledge all the accolades, you know. "But I want to do you a favor," he said. (Laughs) But it wasn't a wise move because I said to Elizabeth, "If you hit a mine or something, that could blow my glasses off." Not hurt me or anything but, you know just a concussion, on the tank commander that is. Now, how do I command if I can't see?

MR: Yes. So is that why they gave it to you, for your eyesight?

CW: Yes, that's what it was.

MR: Yes, you don't think about little things like that.

CW: Yes. That's why I was classified as non-combat. But I was a warm body; who the hell cares? Yes, oh yes, because I saw it, I saw it. "Non-combatant," stamped in two or three places. But it didn't mean anything.

MR: Do you have pictures of yourself? You must.

CW: Yes I have some.

Daughter: There's a nice one of you when you're young with your jacket on that Mom doesn't want to touch.

CW: I hope this is what you wanted.

MR: It's exactly what I wanted.

Daughter: My dad has a flag that he wasn't supposed to bring home.

MR: Was it a Nazi flag?

CW: Yes, it is a souvenir. (To daughter) Grandma had a fit, your mother's mother. My mother-in-law had a fit.

MR: Is it a big one?

Daughter: Oh yes, it's huge.

CW: Yes, I had a shell case and wrapped it up in a shell case and mailed it home. Of course she didn't hardly want to touch it. Grandma wanted to air it out, but she didn't dare put it out on the line.

MR: I had a gentleman that I met down in Albany. He was in the infantry. He got one of those big regimental Nazi flags. He sent it home to his mother. His mother sent it out to get it dry-cleaned. The next thing you know the FBI is knocking on the door.

Grandson: My favorite story that Papa told me about was when they would steal all the love letters, and read them out loud to everybody. From the guys in the tank everyday.

MR: They had some fun didn't they?

Daughter: They probably had to make some fun out of it. It was so awful.

CW: Oh sure, sure...

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